

from addiction. We will support caregivers, and we will drive innovation and long-term solutions. It is a powerful first step as we continue, with our friends in Mexico, to work together hand in hand to fight this terrible scourge.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 766 and 868.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nominations.

The bill clerk read the nominations of John E. Whitley, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army and Charles P. Verdon, of California, to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs, National Nuclear Security Administration.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Whitley and Verdon nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BIPARTISANSHIP

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, for more than four decades, I have had the dis-

tinct privilege of serving in the U.S. Senate, what some have called the world's greatest deliberative body. Speaking on the Senate floor, debating legislation in committee, corralling the support of my colleagues on compromise legislation—these are the moments I will miss. These are the memories I will cherish forever.

To address this body is to experience a singular feeling, a sense that you are a part of something bigger than yourself, a minor character in the grand narrative that is America.

No matter how often I come to speak at this lectern, I experience that feeling, again and again, but today, if I am being honest, I also feel sadness. Indeed, my heart is heavy. It aches for the times when we actually lived up to our reputation as the world's greatest deliberative body. It longs for the days in which Democrats and Republicans would meet on middle ground rather than retreat to their partisan trenches.

Now, some may say I am waxing nostalgic, yearning—as old men often do—for some golden age that never existed. They would be wrong.

The Senate I have described is not some fairytale but the reality we once knew. Having served as a Senator for nearly 42 years, I can tell you this: Things weren't always as they are now.

I was here when this body was at its best. I was here when regular order was the norm, when legislation was debated in committee, and when members worked constructively with one another for the good of the country. I was here when we could say, without any hint of irony, that we were Members of the world's greatest deliberative body.

Times have certainly changed.

Over the last several years, I have witnessed the subversion of Senate rules, the abandonment of regular order, and the full-scale deterioration of the judicial confirmation process. Polarization has ossified. Gridlock is the new norm. Like the humidity here, partisanship permeates everything we do.

On both the left and the right, the bar of decency has been set so low that jumping over it is no longer the objective. Limbo is the new name of the game. How low can you go? The answer, it seems, is always lower.

All the evidence points to an unsettling truth: The Senate, as an institution, is in crisis. The committee process lies in shambles. Regular order is a relic of the past. Compromise—once the guiding credo of this great institution—is now synonymous with surrender.

Since I first came to the Senate in 1978, the culture of this place has shifted fundamentally and not for the better. Here, there used to be a level of congeniality and kinship among colleagues that was hard to find anywhere else. In those days, I counted Democrats among my very best friends. One moment, we would be locking horns on the Senate floor; the next, we would be breaking bread together over family dinner.

My unlikely friendship with the late Senator Kennedy embodied the spirit of goodwill and collegiality that used to thrive here. Teddy and I were a case study in contradictions. He was a dyed-in-the-wool Democrat; I was a resolute Republican. But by choosing friendship over party loyalty, we were able to pass some of the most significant bipartisan achievements of modern times, from the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act to the Ryan White bill and the State Children's Health Insurance Program.

Nine years after Teddy's passing, it is worth asking: Could a relationship like this even exist in today's Senate? Could two people with polar opposite beliefs and from vastly different walks of life come together as often as Teddy and I did for the good of the country? Or are we too busy vilifying each other to even consider friendship with the other side?

Many factors contribute to the current dysfunction, but if I were to identify the root of our crisis, it would be this: the loss of comity and genuine good feeling among Senate colleagues.

Comity is the cartilage of the Senate, the soft connective tissue that cushions impact between opposing joints, but in recent years, that cartilage has been ground to a nub. All movement has become bone on bone. Our ideas grate against each other with increasing frequency and with nothing to absorb the friction. We hobble to get any bipartisan legislation to the Senate floor, much less to the President's desk. The pain is excruciating, and it is felt by the entire Nation.

We must remember that our dysfunction is not confined to the Capitol. It ripples far beyond these walls, to every State, to every town, and to every street corner in America.

The Senate sets the tone of American civic life. We don't mirror the political culture as much as we make it. It is incumbent on us, then, to move the culture in a positive direction, keeping in mind that everything we do here has a trickle-down effect. If we are divided, then the Nation is divided. If we abandon civility, then our constituents will follow.

To mend the Nation, we must first mend the Senate. We must restore the culture of comity, compromise, and mutual respect that used to exist here. Both in our personal and public conduct, we must be the very change we want to see in the country. We must not be enemies but friends.

“Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory will swell when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”

These are not my words but the words of President Abraham Lincoln. They come from a heartfelt plea he made to the American people long ago on the eve of the Civil War. Lincoln's admonition is just as timely today as

it was then. If ever there were a time in our history to heed the better angels of our nature, it is now.

How can we answer Lincoln's call to our better angels? Over the last several months, I have devoted significant time and resources to answering this question. In a series of essays and floor speeches, I have sought to put flesh on the bones of Lincoln's appeal. These writings provide a blueprint for fixing our broken politics. They include: an essay on civility—the indispensable political norm—and how to restore it to the public discourse; a speech entitled “A Tale of Two Cities,” which draws from the tragedies of Charlottesville and Houston in the summer of 2017 to issue a call for unity and strength; a well-reasoned critique of identity politics, specifically, the threat it poses to the American experiment and how we can heal age-old divisions by embracing the politics of ideas, not identity; a discourse on the invaluable worth of the individual and how affirming this worth can help us curb the suicide epidemic among LGBTQ youth and create a stronger, more civil society; a proposal to establish Geneva Conventions for the culture wars, a new set of norms that can ease partisan tensions and help us contain the worst excesses of political warfare; and finally, an op-ed on pluralism and how embracing this forgotten virtue can help us overcome tribal tolerance and effect meaningful change.

These writings appeal to the humanity, grace, and inherent goodness in each of us. The purpose of this project is to remind readers of the singularity of the American experiment and how we can preserve this great Nation only by heeding the higher virtues within us.

As a parting gift, I plan to share a copy of this compilation with each of my Senate colleagues, as well as our friends in the House and leaders in the executive branch. I sincerely ask that each of you take the time to study these writings. Please, ponder their words and ask yourself how we can apply these ideas to restore our Nation's civic health.

When we heed our better angels—when we hearken to the voices of civility and reason native to our very nature—we can transcend our tribal instincts and preserve our democracy for future generations. That we may do so is my humble prayer.

THE UNITED STATES-UNITED KINGDOM FULBRIGHT COMMISSION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, as a member of the British-American Parliamentary Group, I would like to take a moment to recognize the 70th anniversary of the creation of the United States-United Kingdom Fulbright Commission.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Congress took steps aimed at creating a more peaceful and prosperous world. The Fulbright Program, along

with the World Bank and the IMF, are reminders of the importance of collective action for the common good. Since 1946, the Fulbright Program has fostered bilateral relationships through educational exchanges with postgraduate and postdoctoral scholars. In the words of Senator J. William Fulbright, “the vital mortar to seal the bricks of world order is education across international boundaries, not with the expectation that knowledge would make us love each other, but in the hope that it would encourage empathy between nations” Those words are as relevant today as they were back then.

Over the last 70 years, thousands of students from the United States and the United Kingdom have crossed the Atlantic to deepen their understanding of each other's countries and cultures. Fulbright scholarships have not only been the catalysts for great artists, journalists, scientists, lawyers, independent scholars, and many others; they have cemented friendships around the globe for generations.

I invite my fellow Senators to celebrate the many Fulbright scholars and emerging leaders who have worked in countless ways to foster tolerance and understanding in their communities, countries, and around the world. In my 44 years in the Senate, I cannot think of a time when those attributes were more needed than they are today.

OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, last night was a great moment for the Senate.

We have been able to pass a broad legislative package that will address the opioid epidemic in many ways.

As we all know, the opioid crisis is not nearing its end.

We are seeing more and more Americans abuse opioid drugs every year.

In 2016, there were 64,000 overdose deaths, and this number rose to a staggering 72,000 deaths in 2017.

Right now, more than 115 people in the United States die from opioid overdoses every day.

In Iowa last year, more than 200 people died from opioid misuse.

If there is one thing we have learned, it is that no segment of society has been left untouched.

The crisis has affected people all over this country. Communities throughout the United States are desperate for answers.

While overcoming this crisis cannot be accomplished overnight, the passage of the Opioid Crisis Response Act is a huge step in the right direction.

This legislation is a collection of more than 70 proposals from four different committees here in the Senate, including Judiciary, where I led six different bills through committee.

It is important to highlight how well we worked together on both sides of the aisle—and across the aisle—to get to this point. This was a massive bipartisan effort.

On behalf of Judiciary, not a single bill passed through committee without wide bipartisan support. The Judiciary Committee contributed six separate bills—each with different sponsors, to this larger piece of legislation.

I worked with my Judiciary colleagues to get near-unanimous backing for each of the bills. That takes a lot of time and hard work. It takes some compromise. But we were able to get it done.

Several of the bills relate to Drug Enforcement Administration authorities. Those bills will help empower DEA to better identify and stop suspicious orders, gather more information when setting annual quotas for opioids, and facilitate the flow of information among drug manufacturers and distributors to enable better reporting decisions to warn DEA of potential problems.

I teamed up with my fellow Iowan, Senator ERNST, to promote higher participation in drug take-back programs so that unused, forgotten opioids don't find their way from the medicine cabinet into unauthorized hands.

Another bill successfully reported out of the Judiciary Committee reauthorizes the Office of National Drug Control Policy. ONDCP directs, crafts, and coordinates the drug policy strategy for the entire Nation.

Its reauthorization sends a message to other Federal agencies and the country that we will continue to have strong leadership guiding us through this crisis.

Yet another bill closes a loophole addressing illegal actors peddling synthetic drugs, allowing law enforcement to better investigate and prosecute cases involving synthetics.

Outside of the Judiciary Committee legislation, this bill also includes several priorities of mine, including requiring drug manufacturers to publicly disclose payments made to nurse practitioners and physician assistants, just like doctors; increasing access to substance abuse treatment in rural areas via telehealth; and better data collection to make sure taxpayer dollars are spent helping people who need help and not lining the pockets of crooks who take advantage of common people.

While I cosponsored a number of bills in the opioid package, it is important to remember that this legislation is a team effort.

The combination of bills from the Judiciary Committee, Commerce Committee, Finance Committee, and the HELP Committee broadly address the multiple facets of the epidemic.

As we have learned through several Judiciary Committee hearings, we can't focus on single issues as we combat this drug crisis.

Rather, this legislation looks at the epidemic as a whole.

From prevention, treatment, recovery, and enforcement efforts, the bill runs the gamut. It contains provisions on transparency in opioid prescribing, family-focused residential treatment